



The Facts

Tell

the Story:

Catholics

and

Choice



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The Facts Tell the Story: Catholics and Choice



Individual conscience in matters of moral decision-making is at the core of the Catholic tradition. The public policy views of Catholics reflect this tradition. Catholics believe in legal abortion. They also believe in contraception, sexuality education, government support for family planning programs in developing countries and the separation of church and state.

- Only 20% of Catholics believe that church leaders should have the final say regarding the morality of a Catholic advocating free choice regarding abortion.

— *National Catholic Reporter poll, Oct. 1999*

- Less than one-fourth (23%) of U.S. Catholics agree with the bishops' position that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances.

— *CBS/New York Times poll, July 2000*

- A majority of Catholic women (52%) polled in a national survey prefer a hospital in their community that offers elective abortions to one that does not.

— *Belden Russonello & Stewart poll, April 2000*

- 53% of Catholics believe that you can be a good Catholic without obeying the church hierarchy's teaching on abortion.

— *National Catholic Reporter poll, Oct. 1999*

- Only 13% of the nation's 47,200 Catholic priests belong to Priests for Life.

— *Membership information from Priests for Life, July 2000*

- 96% of all Catholic women who have ever had sex have used modern contraceptive methods at some point in their lives.

— *1995 National Survey of Family Growth, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

- Less than 3% of sexually active Catholic women use church-approved family planning methods.

— *1995 National Survey of Family Growth, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

- 57% of Catholics say that contraceptives should be available to teens even if their parents don't approve.

— *1998 General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center*

- Only 9% of U.S. Catholics feel so strongly about abortion that they would not vote for a political candidate who disagreed with their opinion.

— *CBS News/New York Times poll, May/June 1996*

- 77% of Catholics say that it is not appropriate for religious leaders to urge people to vote for a candidate because of his or her stand on abortion.

— *CBS News/New York Times poll, May/June 1996*

- 79% of Catholics support U.S. aid programs for international family planning.

— *Belden Russonello & Stewart, Dec. 1998*

Which of these comes closest to your view?		
Catholic Respondents	All Respondents	
Abortion should be generally available to those who want it	25%	29%
Abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now	49%	47%
Abortion should not be permitted	23%	20%
Don't know	3%	3%

Source: *CBS/New York Times poll, July 2000*

Catholics are prochoice.